

Message Text

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ACTION L-01

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 ARA-06 SSO-00 NSCE-00 NSC-05

SCA-01 INR-05 INRE-00 EUR-08 RSC-01 /042 W

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O 120016Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8819

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SAN JOSE 4716

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, CS

SUBJECT: AFTERMATH OF ANTI-VESCO CAMPAIGN:

EMBASSY INTERPRETATION OF ODUBER DECISION

REF: (A) SAN JOSE 4673

(B) SAN JOSE 4646

(C) SAN JOSE 4665

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH THE INTENSITY OF THE PRESS PLAY AGAINST VESCO HAS SUBSIDED, BOTH MAJOR NEWSPAPERS TOOK BITTER PARTING SHOTS AT PRESIDENT ODUBER ON THE VESCO EXPULSION QUESTION. THE PRESIDENT WAS SHARPLY CRITICIZED VARIOUSLY FOR FAILURE TO DO HIS DUTY, LACK OF VISION, DISTORTING THE FACTS, LACK OF LEADERSHIP, ETC.

2. ODUBER'S LETTER, WHICH PROVOKED THE TIRADES, SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN UNNECESSARILY HARSH ON WELL MEANING, NON-POLITICALLY MOTIVATED ANTI-VESCO ELEMENTS IN THE SOCIETY AND AS A RESULT HE MAY SUFFER FRUTHER LACK OF SUPPORT FROM THEM AND EVEN WITHIN HIS PARTY. HIS OBLIQUE SUGGESTION THAT THE U.S. MAY HAVE GIVEN HIM REASON TO TAKE HIS DECISION SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN ESPECIALLY UNNECESSARY. WE SEE LITTLE LIKELIHOOD NOW THATEITHER THE EXPULSION MOTION OR THE EXTRADITION BILL REFORM WILL PASS BEFORE THE NEXT REGULAR SESSION BEGINS IN MAY 1975. END SUMMARY.

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3. ANTI-VESCO PLAY HAS DIMINISHED SUBSTANTIALLY IN THE WAKE OF PRESIDENT ODUBER'S ANNOUNCED DECISION (REFTEL B) NOT TO EXPEL FUGITIVE FINANCIER ROBERT VESCO. THE PARTING BLOWS FROM THE ANTI-VESCO FORCES, HOWEVER, WERE BARE-KNUCKLE EDITORIALS ON DECEMBER 10 IN BOTH "LA NACION" AND "LA REPUBLICA" (TMA LATTER'S IS IN TWO PARTS CONTINUED DENNUMBER 11). BOTH PAPERS HAD BEEN SPEARHEADING THE MEDIA ATTACKS DESIGNED TO PRESSURE THE PRESIDENT TO EXPEL VESCO. THE BITTERLY CAUSTIC EDITORIAL TONE, REFLECTING BOTH PAPERS' FURY WITH THE PRESIDENT, PLUS PUBLIC SENTIMENT ASSOCIATED WITH SIGNERS OF THE EXPULSION MANIFESTO, LEAVES NO DOUBT THAT THERE ARE SOME ANGRY OPEN WOUNDS THAT WILL BE MOST DIFFICULT FOR ODUBER TO HEAL SHORT OF SOME PUBLICLY ACCEPTABLE ACTION AGAINST VESCO. SOME OF THE POINTS PICKED UP IN THESE TWO EDITORIALS FOLLOW.

4. "LA NACION'S" EDITORIAL, DRAFTED PERSONALLY BY DIRECTOR GUIDO FERNANDEZ, BORADLY ATTACKED ODUBER FOR HIS FAILURE TO LIVE UP TO CAMPAIGN PROMISES ON CORRUPTION AND GOVERNMENTAL PROGRAMS. THE EDITORIAL DISCUSSED THE SAOPIM SCANDAL AND ODUBER'S RELUCTANCE TO ACCCEPT THE ASSEMBLY'S RECOMMENDATIONS TO FIRE CERTAIN PLN FIGURES; AND CRITICIZED THE POORLY MANAGED FAMILY ASSISTANCE BILL FOR LACK OF PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP. THE EDITORIAL, IN MENTIONING THESE TWO ASPECTS, LED UP TO A LONG DISCUSSION OF THE VESCO DECISION. FERNANDEZ ACCUSED THE PRESIDENT OF "LACK OF HISTORICAL VISION..." BY, AMONG OTHER THINGS, DEPRECATING THE PATRIOTISM OF RESPECTED CITIZENS WHO URGED VESCO'S EXPULSION. IN LIKE MANNER, THE EDITORIAL NOTES, ODUBER REFUSED TO ACCEPT THE POSITIONS OF BUSINESS CHAMBERS AND LABOR UNION CONFEDERATIONS OPPOSED TO THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE PLAN, HIS OWN ASSEMBLY FRACTION ON SAOPIM, AND NOW THE MANY PRESTIGIOUS PRIVATE CITIZENS OPPOSED TO VESCO. WITH REGARD TO EVIDENCE AGAINST VESCO, FERNANDEZ SAYS THAT THE PRESIDENT IGNORED THE JACKSON COMMITTEE HEARINGS, THE FACT THAT VESCO CANNOT RETURN TO THE U.S., CANADA, OR SWITZERLAND, AND THE DAMAGED "MORAL FIBER" OF THE COUNTRY AS WELL AS ITS TARNISHED

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INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION. IN SPITE OF ALL THIS, THE EDITORIALST COMMENTS THAT ODUBER CHARACTERIZED THE ACCUSATIONS AGAINST VESCO AS "FALSE AND ILL-INTENTIONED ALARMS." THE EDITORIAL ENDS DISPARIRINGLY NOTING THAT VESCO WILL INEVITABLY HAVE TO LEAVE COSTA RICA SOME DAY EITHER UNDER HIS WON POWER OR "ACCOMPANIED TO THE FRONTIER...BY THE RESPRESENTATIVES OF LAW AND ORDER."

5. "LA REPUBLICA'S" EDITORIAL CALLS ODUBER'S LETTER TO THE PRO-DECENCY COMMITTEE "DISILLUSIONING" BECAUSE IT TWISTED THE FACTS, MADE INAPPROPRIATE INSINUATIONS, AND PUBLICLY DEFENDED AN UNDESIRABLE INDIVIDUAL. THE PRESIDENT PLACED HIMSELF, THE EDITORIAL STATES, ON THE SIDE OF VESCO AND AGSINST THE COSTA RICAN PEOPLE. IT SAID THAT THE LETTER IS AN INSULT TO THE THOUSANDS OF RESPECTABLE COSTA RICANS WHO WANT VESCO EXPELLED ANDMENTIONED SPECIFICALLY THE OPPOSITION TO VESCO OF THE BAR ASSOCIATION, THE CHURCH, THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL, THE ELECTED MUNICIPAL REPRESENTATIVES, AND HIS OWN SECOND VICE-PRESIDENT.

6. "LA REPUBLICA" WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE "POVERTY AND CHILDISHNESS OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ARGUMENT" (OF DEPRECATING THE CITIZENS BEHIND THE MANIFESTO) LEAVES OPEN FOR EVERYONE TO SEE THE WEAKNESS OF THE PRESIDENT AND AUGURS ILL FOR THE COUNTRY IN THE COMING YEARS. "LA REPUBLICA'S" EDITORIAL NOTES THAT THE PRESIDENT WAS NOT ASKED TO JUDGE THE LEGALITY OF VESCO'S ACTIVITIES, BATXRRGED#TO EXPEL HIM ON MORAL GROUNDS. IT NOTES THAT IF THE PRESIDENT IS UNABLE TO ACT BECAUSE OF HISNATURAL WEAKNESSES ("FLAQUEZAS NATURALES" -- ODUBER'S TERM) THEN HE IS SERIOUSLY ABDICATING HIS RESPONSIBILITIES.

NOTE BY OC/T: #AS RECEIVED.

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MRN: 1974SAN JO004716 SEGMENT NUMBER: 000002 ERROR READING TEXT INDEX
FILE; TELEGRAM TEXT FOR THIS SEGMENT IS UNAVAILABLE

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: EXPULSION, POLICIES, PRESS COMMENTS, PRESIDENT, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 DEC 1974
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: boyleja
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974SANJO04716
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740361-0981, D740360-0346
From: SAN JOSE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741240/aaaabhhuu.tel
Line Count: 145
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION L
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: 74 SAN JOSE 4673
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: boyleja
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags: ANOMALY
Review Date: 11 SEP 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <11 SEP 2002 by martinml>; APPROVED <18 MAR 2003 by boyleja>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AFTERMATH OF ANTI-VESCO CAMPAIGN: EMBASSY INTERPRETATION OF ODUBER DECISION
TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, CS, US, (VESCO, ROBERT), (ODUBER)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005